

553355

RECEIVED

OCT 19 2001

Department of Energy/Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Study comments

Dear Folks:

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on your plan to store high level nuclear wastes at Yucca Mountain. In this time that we face growing threats to our nation's security and safety, Yucca Mountain is certainly relevant. The citizens of Southern Nevada and Eastern California will face safety, security and health issues for ten thousand years if the Yucca Mountain repository is allowed to be built.

I believe there are better alternatives to building Yucca Mountain. One is to reprocess the unspent fuel and recycle it into the nuclear power plant cycle. With only about ten percent of the the fuel rod consumed in the initial power plant cycle, it makes no sense to store the remaining ninety percent. How wasteful.

The DOE and other government agencies should put their energy into repealing any treaties that ban our ability to re-process the fuel and begin reprocessing it. Other nations are doing this. We certainly have the technology. By recycling the fuel as many times as we can we will reduce the amount of nuclear waste that we eventually have to store. We may not need a site the size of Yucca Mountain. Lets use what we have and retire from the nuclear power field.

We should store the material in dry casks at the site of the power plants that generated it, not under a sacred mountain in the Nevada desert. There are still too many questions unanswered by DOE studies relative to seismic/volcanic threats, the migration of nuclear elements into the water table and offsite, and the ability to adequately store these materials some of which may remain toxic for 500,000 years.

How can you assure me that radioactivity won't enter the groundwater table and migrate into the drinking water supplies of Amargosa, and Pahrump or threaten the ecology of Death Valley, which shares the same ground water basin as Yucca Mountain. Already contamination has migrated off the Test Site into neighboring aquifers in just fifty years. The DOE claims that Yucca Mountain is a dry site but have you factored radical climate changes into your hydrologic models, the kind that could be generated by the consequences of global warming. I worry about people, pupfish and a national park to the east of Yucca Mountain.

Also on my mind is the turbulent history of volcanic/ seismic activity in the Yucca Mountain area. That's obvious to anybody who has visited the site or traveled nearby. Earthquakes have even been occurring during the site characterization studies and I don't believe modeling can truly characterize what may happen during the next ten thousand years. There are a number of hot springs in the area and obviously alot of heat in the rocks. If there is any reasonable doubt that a geologic event could take place at Yucca Mountain we should leave it alone. But can we trust the DOE to level with us. With your horrific record on accountability on other matters nuclear, like Hanford, its not surprising the level of mistrust and cynicism out there about Yucca Mountain. Can we believe that you will err on the side of public safety and health or be driven by the intense pressures of the nuclear utilites who want to get the stuff out of their backyard and into the mountain. And there is the small matter of six billion dollars already thrown down the hole at Yucca Mountain.

I live in the Owens Valley and occasionally visit southeastern Inyo county, the communities of Tecopa and Shoshone. Highway 127 may become a route for shipments of nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain. I am concerned that very little thought and effort has been given to the potential for an accident along these backroads. Are these tiny communities prepared to handle such an occurence. Do they have specialized equipment and training? What is the socio-economic impact on these communities, which border Death Valley National Park, of having nuclear waste pass through your town?

When the DOE just recently exposed their scientific data to international peer review how can the DOE secretary make a recommendation on site suitability when that peer review won't be completed until next year. Let the process run its course before moving onto the next step.

With a design capacity of 70,000 tons of high level waste, we can store what we've generated already and a little bit more. It seems to me that if we continue to generate nuclear power in this country as an alternative to dirty coal and oil, Yucca Mountain could be obsolete in a hundred years. What then is the provision for storing ensuing high level waste generated by future generations. This is a terrible legacy

553355

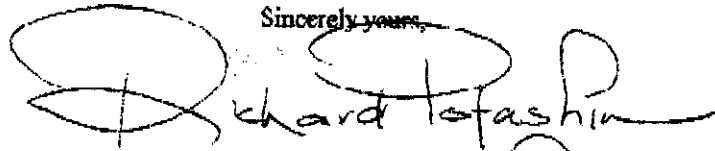
we've created for future generations and another security nightmare for our country.

Another thought, I really think Yucca Mountain is moot until the federal government deals with its obligations under the Ruby Valley Treaty of 1864, giving title to Yucca Mountain to the Western Shoshone nation. I am concerned about the physical and spiritual implications of storing such poisons on lands that may not belong to us.

In conclusion, for the above reasons, I cannot give a repository at Yucca Mountain a resounding vote of confidence and I feel Secretary Abraham should not recommend the site to the President. Please look at the alternatives to Yucca Mountain and alternative energy sources that may not leave a problem of this magnitude for our children's children's children's..... I welcome a response to the points I've raised.

Sincerely yours,

RICHARD POTASHIN
HCR 67 BOX 25
INDEPENDENCE, CA 93526



Martha Potashin
Harry Potashin